

like he lost me by ciders

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Summary:

He's crying like he lost me, Will thought to himself, tears pooling against the chest of Mike's sweater as he poured himself out into his arms. A sickening, maddening thought crossed Will's mind, and in return, Will buried his closed eyes tighter against Mike's neck.

He did. Didn't he? If only for a moment.

like he lost me

Mike.

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MIKE.

“...Mike!”

Will jolted up so fast in the back seat of the Byers' family car that a thick pain shot through his neck, a minor yank from such a rough start. It took him only a moment to realize where he was, and when he did, he felt his heart's violent pace begin to slow if only slightly, his fingertips digging into the leather cushioning beneath him. Taking a quick look around like a bewildered animal, Will noticed a face turned back towards him from the passenger's seat: a familiar, bewildered face that Will could recall missing.

“Will?” Jonathan spoke up quickly, his worried voice reflecting his nerves on high alert as he surveyed his younger brother. Will, throat dryer than the cool winter air that whipped past the moving vehicle they sat in, sat forward quickly, not taking any offense as Jonathan leaned back a bit in defense.

“Whe—” Will attempted, his throat letting out a hoarse croak like he hadn't spoken a word in years, sending him into a rapid bout of

coughs that sucked the air right out of him. Out of the corner of his eye, Will saw the vehicle's driver try to twist around and look at him, only to catch a comforting hand placed on the top of their arm from Jonathan.

"Will, honey?" Joyce spoke as she desperately tried to keep her eyes focused on the road, eyes flickering back and forth from the sights in front of her to the rearview mirror. As the coughing from her little boy finally began to slow, the dizziness that swelled inside of her chest like a thick fog began to drain.

"Wh.... Where's Mike?" Will finally croaked, his mind set in a straight line like his thoughts were corralled by thick iron fencing and horse blinders. He only had one thing on his mind, and he couldn't pry his attention from it if he wanted to: he needed to see Mike. He needed to see his best friend. He needed to know, more than he cared to know about his own state, if Mike was alright. Fingers dipping harder into the leather of the seat beneath him, Will's crystal green eyes, fresh and un-fogged from the previous storm inside of his subconscious, searched the immediate road in front of the car desperately.

"He's fine, bud. You're fine. Everything's fine. We're almost there," Jonathan assured the boy in the back seat, soft eyes fixating on his pale fingers as he clutched at the back seat covers. Reaching out a thin hand, Jonathan took one of Will's hands and pulled it away from the leather, watching as Will realized what he had been doing the entire time. Teeth chattering from his nerves, Will slowly released his vicious grip on his seat and sat back, hesitant as he could be. He could feel his heart hammering in his chest, threatening to rip right through his chest at the pace it was going. He needed to be there sooner than soon. He needed to be there *now*.

He didn't have to wait long before they turned onto the familiar drive, and Will had to refrain from launching himself out of the back seat door before the car stopped moving.

It didn't take long for Will to spot him, even in the dark: illuminated under the dim door light, Steve, Dustin, Lucas and Max were long gone inside of the Wheeler house to take shelter from the cold as they waited, and Mike sat huddled alone on the front porch, blanket draped around his shoulders as he sat leaning forward hard on his knees, thighs pulled up to his chest as he stared forward into the dew sprinkled lawn. Almost as though a light switch was flicked on inside of his brain, Mike's head shot up from it's resting position on the tops of his hands, and as his gaze fixated on the car pulling up to the curb in front of his home, pure relief washed over his face like a tidal wave. Will hadn't realized he was ripping off his seatbelt until the car had pulled to a stop and he was stopped by the thin protective strap as he attempted to slip out of the car.

Tearing the seatbelt away from his chest, Will threw open the back door and climbed out, ignoring the gentle sting of gravel underneath his thin socked feet.

"Will?" Mike called softly as he rose to his feet, his voice light and airy as though he wasn't quite believing the sight before him.

Will took two slow, cautious steps up over the curb and onto the lawn before he practically lost control of his movements. Before he had time to think about it, he was breaking into a sprint.

"Mike!" Will yelped in pure relief, tears dotting his vision and pooling before they spilled down his cheeks. By the time the two had collided, tears were streaming down both of their faces, unrelenting

as Will threw his arms around Mike, hands finding each other at Mike's back as his fingers intertwined. He took in everything all at once; the way Mike smelled (like cinnamon, of course, he always had) and the way his sweater pressed tight against Will's cheek. He took in the boy's warmth (*you're like an oven, Wheeler!*), and the way that, even though Mike was much taller than him, he still seemed to find a way to slip his forehead into the crook of Will's neck, tears grazing his t-shirt clad shoulder as Mike's hand pressed tenderly against the back of Will's head. He took in the way Mike's dark curls tickled his ears, and he took in sobs that rippled up from Mike's throat. He took in everything, everything. Nothing fell unseen.

He's crying like he lost me, Will thought to himself, tears pooling against the chest of Mike's sweater as he poured himself out into his arms. A sickening, maddening thought crossed Will's mind, and in return, Will buried his closed eyes against Mike's chest.

He did. Didn't he? If only for a moment.

The two held onto each other for what felt like an eternity but still was nowhere near long enough, before Will's mind began to overflow and his fingers gripped at the smooth fabric of Mike's shirt bunched up in his fists. One thing swam in the ocean of his consciousness then, one thing that felt so much like a distant memory but was really so fresh it was practically raw in his brain. Fingers pressed gently against Mike's sides, Will pulled back to look up at the boy before him, a trembling smile crossing his lips as he looked up at Mike's teary eyed, pink flushed face.

"I thought I was the only one who remembered that day," Will whispered through tear stained lips, feeling the surprise and euphoria on Mike's face rock through his being like an earthquake. Chills trickled down the skin on his back, and through his tears, which only seemed to come quicker and quicker as seconds passed, Mike let out

a disbelieving, choked laugh, shaking his head as he observed the boy in front of him.

“You thought I’d ever forget?” Mike said simply, and the two collapsed into relief stricken tears against each other’s frames, unable to imagine ever letting go again. Mike decided one thing then, simple, plain and sure; he would never let anything bad happen to Will Byers ever again. Not if he could stop it in any way.

He would protect the boy he loved if it killed him. And some part of Mike, as he gripped Will’s sides with unrelenting gratefulness coursing through him, was afraid of how truly he meant that.